

# Ca/OSHA Adds Aerosol Transmissible Standard Expected to be Added in Canada

May 28, 2009

As a direct result of the experiences with Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), Avian Influenza and the Novel Influenza H1N1, the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OHSA) Standards Board has adopted a Aerosol Transmissible Standard and a Zoonotic Disease Standard. This is a very important milestone in occupational health standards development, as it is the first standard of its kind to explicitly acknowledge that inhalation exposure is likely to be the predominant mechanism for transmission of a variety of lower respiratory infections. It's particular importance is underscored by its adoption in the context of the current mild swine flu pandemic. REA has long advocated the need to view and treat lower respiratory infections as inhalation-transmitted diseases, and consequently we are very encouraged by the Cal/OHSA standard.



By way of background, in August 2008, Cal/OHSA recognized that employees in health care and other environments faced new and emerging infectious disease threats as well as long-standing or re-emerging threats (such as tuberculosis, pertussis, anthrax and bovine tuberculosis). Cal/OHSA's goal was to ensure that a standardized level of infection control precautions would be taken to protect employees. These standards, recognized as the first regulations to explicitly address communicable diseases that can be spread by droplet, aerosol or dust transmission (i.e. coughing or sneezing), were adopted on May 27, 2009.



Californian employers covered by these standards will be required to implement and maintain effective written programs for infection control, source control, screening and referral, communications, transmission reduction (via isolation, mechanical ventilation and respiratory protection), medical services, and training.

Although these standards currently apply only in California, it is very likely that these new standards will gradually be adopted more broadly throughout the United States, and their influence will most certainly be felt in Canada and abroad. Also, due diligence considerations would dictate that Canadian employers with employees that may be affected by such aerosol transmissible diseases should take a serious look into these standards for guidance in the development of their own infection control programs. If you are unsure about how to best protect your employees from aerosol transmissible diseases, or would like more information, feel free to contact us at [consultants@rea.ca](mailto:consultants@rea.ca).

## Workplaces Affected

The Cal/OSHA Aerosol Transmissible Standard will be applicable to workplaces and operations where workers may come into contact with aerosol transmissible pathogens, such as:

- health care environments,
- facilities that may receive persons who have been involved in an uncontrolled release of biological agents,
- police services,
- public health services,
- correctional facilities,
- homeless shelters,
- drug treatment programs,
- pathology laboratories,
- medical examiners' facilities,
- coroners' offices,
- mortuaries,
- laboratories, and
- maintenance of facilities that may reasonably be anticipated to be contaminated with aerosol transmissible pathogens.

The Zoonotic Regulation will cover operations that involve animal handling such as laboratories, farms, zoos, veterinaries, and pet stores.



**rea**<sup>®</sup>

**Advancing Health and Safety**

11 Allstate Parkway, Suite 110  
Markham, Ontario L3R 9T8  
1(888) 732-4347 - (905) 752-0797  
[consultants@rea.ca](mailto:consultants@rea.ca)

30 Concourse Gate, Suite 110  
Ottawa, Ontario K2E 7V7  
1(866) 732-3208 - (613) 225-5200